

School of Excellence in Education

Teachers and Principals Awarded for Student Achievement (TAPASA)



The San Antonio School of Excellence in Education (SEE), a charter school district, is implementing Teacher and Principals Awarded for Student Achievement (TAPASA), a performance-based incentive program designed to increase student achievement. TAPASA incorporates professional development, teacher-to-student and teacher-to-teacher mentoring programs, and a recruitment and retention system. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), a series of benchmarks and end-of-course tests, will be used to measure student achievement.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

SEE, a Texas Education Agency (TEA) accredited, open-enrollment charter school district, opened in 1998 and serves approximately 2,300 students on eight campuses. SEE is a high-need urban school district—86 percent of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs. Forty-seven percent of the students are Hispanic; 45 percent are African American; less than 1 percent are Native American or Asian; and 6 percent are white (non-Hispanic). Teacher salaries are lower in SEE than in neighboring districts, which contributes to a high rate of attrition among teachers who obtain certification while working in the district. Fifty percent of these teachers transfer to another district for a 32-percent salary increase. SEE is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization and is governed by a Board of Directors and managed by a Superintendent.

Background

TAPASA's goal is to increase student achievement by creating a performance-based system to reward teachers and principals for their effectiveness in the classroom. The five main objectives of the project are to:

- (1) Establish a system that provides teachers and principals serving high-need schools with differentiated levels of compensation based primarily on student achievement gains at the school and classroom levels.
- (2) Develop strategies to have 100 percent of math and science classes instructed by highly qualified teachers, 100 percent of ESL and special education classes instructed by ESL or special education certified teachers respectively, and to have a voluntary hard-to-staff-teacher turnover rate of less than 95 percent by Year 5.

Location(s)	San Antonio, Texas
Award Date	June 2007
Duration	5 years
Partners	Wexford, Inc.

- (3) Provide teachers with continuous support and feedback through classroom observations and walkthroughs (formal & informal) that occur at least three times in a nine-week grading period, and four formative (one each during each nine-week grading period) and one summative evaluation.
- (4) Create a student-teacher/adult mentor program for 100 percent of students deficient in at least one subject area and teacher-teacher mentor program for all new teachers.
- (5) Increase the number of teachers, principals, vice-principals, and assistant principals whose students reach a “Recognized” or “Exemplary” level of performance based on student assessment or faculty evaluation results.

In addition to the five main objectives of the project, the project will maintain a record of

- (1) Changes in teacher and principal compensation systems, as measured by the percentage of a district’s personnel budget that is used for performance-related payments to effective (as measured by student achievement gains) teachers and principals.
- (2) Changes in LEA personnel deployment practices, as measured by changes over time in the percentage of teachers and principals in high-need schools who have a record of effectiveness.

Incentives

SEE has developed a performance-based incentive menu that builds on the current teacher and principal salary structure. The TAPASA program links teacher salaries to student achievement, multiple observations of teacher and administrator performance, and additional duties taken on by teachers. In preparation for the grant proposal, key stakeholders developed main and secondary menus of criteria for teachers and principals to qualify for the incentives.

The main menu includes criteria related to gains in student achievement for the school, class, and targeted subgroups of students. The main menu also includes incentives to recruit highly qualified math and science and ESL teachers as well as to retain highly qualified special education teachers.

The secondary menu includes serving as a mentor to teachers or a mentor who works with students and receives high ratings on evaluations. The secondary menu also includes criteria for principals, including gains in student achievement and completing teacher observations and evaluations. Additionally, Teacher Incentive Funds will add three workdays to the science and mathematics teachers’ contracts for additional training time on content-specific instructional strategies and for vertical collaboration time across levels.

Evaluation

Wexford, Inc., the external evaluator, works through a Total Quality Management system assessing the management and quality along with the effectiveness and impact of the project. A mixed methods approach has been used to capture all the pertinent data.

Resources

In the first year, SEE has budgeted \$40,000 to support bonuses for junior high and high school math teachers. Also budgeted is \$15,000 for extra-duty stipends. Funding sources to meet the match requirements include funds from Title I, Title II, IDEA, reallocated general operating funds, grant funds, and monetary donations from individuals and businesses.

SEE has plans in place to fulfill the 75 percent matching requirement by Year 5 and has the infrastructure to support and maintain TAPASA.

Data Systems

The district has an extensive technology department located on every campus. Members of the technology staff train teachers on three data management systems. These systems are used to track student achievement based on TAKS and the Texas Primary Reading Inventory. The Public Education Information Management System collects information on student demographics and performance and personnel and financial and organizational information. The Regional Service Centers Computer Cooperative (RSCCC) is a comprehensive micro/mini computer software package that works in conjunction with TEA's request for data. The RSCCC systems include accounting information related to payroll and budget, as well as information on student attendance, grades, scheduling, discipline, and special education management. txConnect, which can be accessed by teachers, parents, and administrators, is a tool to build lesson plans as well as track assignments and grades.

Year 2 Activities

In the second year of TAPASA, the school's overall incentive budget increased from 6 percent to 9 percent of the total personnel budget. Teachers and principals have become very engaged and involved in the process through the ongoing oversight activities.

Year 3 Outlook

In the third year of TAPASA, the project continues to focus on refining the incentive details and adjusting to ongoing needs. Adjustments to the current data management system are being made along with additional data collection systems at each district site.